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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM
IN THE AGENDA OF THE FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION

Letter dated 11 November 1996 from the Permanent Representatives of Bangladesh, Nicaragua, Pakistan and the Philippines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, we have the honour to request the inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly of an additional item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration".

An explanatory memorandum in support of the above request is annexed to the present letter, in accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Anwarul K. CHOWDHURY
Permanent Representative of
Bangladesh to the United Nations

(Signed) Erich VILCHEZ ASHER
Permanent Representative of
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(Signed) Ahmad KAMAL
Permanent Representative of
Pakistan to the United Nations

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ANNEX

Explanatory memorandum

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is an intergovernmental organization with 59 member States and 41 observer States (November 1996). Established in 1951 outside the United Nations system, IOM has held observer status in the General Assembly since 1992 and actively participates in coordination mechanisms established within the United Nations. IOM works closely with a number of United Nations partners, including the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A cooperation agreement between the United Nations and IOM was signed at Geneva on 25 June 1996.

The focus of IOM over recent years has expanded to offer programmes that assist migrants and Governments worldwide. With its headquarters at Geneva, IOM has some 1,200 staff members spread over 77 regional and country offices.

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. It acts with its partners in the international community to assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; to advance understanding of migration issues; to encourage social and economic development through migration; and to work towards effective respect of the human dignity and well-being of migrants. In the context of its Constitution, individuals of concern to IOM include economic migrants, displaced persons, refugees, nationals returning to their home country and other individuals in need of international migration assistance.

Historically, IOM has emphasized assistance to migrants resettling permanently in another country. In recent years, however, the organization's activities and functions have changed in order to meet the new and evolving needs and challenges faced by the international community.

The conclusions of the International Conference on Population and Development on issues related to migration have been one of the important guiding elements in planning the organization's strategic direction towards the next century. IOM participates in the working group on international migration under the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All of the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

IOM cooperation with the United Nations on concrete initiatives has experienced considerable growth over recent years. Examples of note include active participation in all global United Nations conferences, the execution of a four-year research project on migration dynamics in developing countries funded by UNFPA, the Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons and Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, organized together with UNHCR and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) at

Geneva in May 1996, joint operations with UNHCR on the return and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons, and cooperation with UNDP on migration issues in post-conflict situations.

IOM groups its work into four broad categories of programme activity: humanitarian migration; migration for development; technical cooperation; and migration debate, research and information:

(a) Humanitarian migration:

(i) Voluntary return migration in safety and dignity is an important component of IOM humanitarian migration efforts: assisting displaced populations in post-crisis situations, helping unsuccessful asylum-seekers and, increasingly, victims of trafficking, in particular women and children, and other stranded persons seeking to migrate through irregular channels, to go home. In this field, IOM has complemented its operational activities with efforts to promote dialogue among sending, receiving and transit countries faced with both the harsh realities and the humanitarian dilemmas of these increasing irregular flows of migrants, with a view towards both cooperative solutions and prevention. Resettlement of migrants, including for family reunion is a third important component of IOM traditional humanitarian migration activities;

(ii) IOM also undertakes large programmes to assist internally displaced persons as well as demobilized combatants whose transport home and reintegration are essential to the transition from conflict to a peaceful civil society. While having been involved in helping the resettlement or return of victims of most major forced population movements over the past four and a half decades, in more recent years IOM has increasingly focused on the migration aspects of emergencies;

(iii) In post-emergency situations, IOM may provide assistance in the following areas: return and reintegration of internally displaced persons, civilian reintegration of demobilized combatants in cooperation with United Nations military, return of qualified nationals, repatriation of refugees in cooperation with UNHCR, tracing and family reunification in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), capacity-building in migration-related areas, migration information and job referral services, micro projects to facilitate reintegration of returnees and local communal governance support to alleviate migratory pressures;

(iv) The migration assistance IOM provides to the internally displaced can cover a wide range of interrelated activities, such as arranging transport, evacuations and returns; and providing health care as well as temporary shelter and other material relief. IOM also provides rapid analysis of migratory flows; develops national population information systems; and provides technical cooperation to Governments;

(v) In its cooperation with the United Nations, IOM participates in coordinated international humanitarian response and the consolidated inter-agency appeals issued by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The independent status of IOM, however, has occasionally permitted it to operate in areas such as Iraq and Kuwait during the Persian Gulf crisis and in Chechnya, at a time when the United Nations was unable to gain access;

(b) Migration for development: For several decades, IOM has carried out programmes predicated on the concept that migration, particularly of the highly skilled, can promote economic and social development. More recently, however, IOM focuses on the return of developing country nationals who have acquired skills abroad and who through their return contribute to national development efforts. Significant programmes of the latter type are also under way in certain post-crisis situations, aimed at strengthening capacity where qualified manpower has been lost to genocide or war;

(c) Technical cooperation: Efforts are related largely to the effects of the changes in the Commonwealth of Independent States and in Central and Eastern Europe on both intraregional and interregional migration flows, but increasingly also on the needs of other countries facing new types of migration challenges. IOM focuses on building the capacity to develop and implement adequate migration policies by providing expert technical advice and training, arrangements for the sharing of experiences and hands-on migration management methods among States and with other international organizations;

(d) Migration debate, research and information:

(i) The IOM focus in advancing the migration debate has been to encourage interchange at the intergovernmental level, through workshops, seminars and conferences on such issues as trafficking in migrants, respect for the rights and dignity of migrants, migration and the environment, emigration dynamics in developing countries, etc. The latter is the subject of a four-year research project supported by UNFPA that has particular relevance to both the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development and the work of the Commission on Population and Development at its 1997 session. Regional and subregional dialogues to this end have recently been held covering sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States, Central America and the Caribbean. Other recent research has focused on trafficking in women in particular, reflecting the priorities of the Cairo and Beijing Programmes of Action and IOM's own increasing emphasis on gender issues related to migration;

(ii) Information about the realities and risks of irregular migration to intending migrants is an area in which IOM has experimented considerably over the past several years. In this context of contributing to prevention of irregular migration, however, IOM has also stressed the need for receiving States to create immigration programmes that more adequately reflect labour demands currently being met through clandestine migration, and to make these known at the same time that control measures to deal with irregular migrants are

publicized. In all these endeavours, the positive role migration still continues to play for many individuals and sending and receiving countries also requires constant underscoring. Finally, in the information field, IOM has created a migration home page on the World Wide Web (http://www.iom.ch), which is designed to serve both as a primary source of information on migration (legislation, administrative structures, meetings, publications, researchers, etc.) as well as a link to other migration-related web sites.

The established organs of IOM are the Council, the Executive Committee and the Administration. The Council, on which each member State has one representative and one vote, is the highest authority of IOM and determines its policies. The Executive Committee, comprising at least nine member States elected for two-year periods, oversees the policies, operations and administration of IOM. The Administration, comprising a Director General, a Deputy Director General and such staff as the Council may determine, is responsible for the administrative and executive functions of IOM, in accordance with the Constitution and the policies and decisions of the Council and the Executive Committee. The Director General is the highest executive official of IOM and is elected by the Council for a period of five years.

The IOM budget is composed of an administrative part, funded by assessed contributions from all member States according to an agreed percentage scale and an operational part funded wholly by voluntary contributions from Governments and multilateral and private sources. IOM maintains a limited emergency revolving fund for emergency assessment use and for initial start-up of emergency operations prior to actual receipt of external operational funding.